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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, April 22, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Bedspreads for Summer." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Maybe you have been thinking about fixing the bedrooms in your house for summer. These spring mornings, while you have been busy spreading up the beds or dusting about, maybe you have also been imagining how to make the south room cool and comfortable for summer, or how to rearrange the east room to look more fresh and summery. Maybe you have been considering how to furnish -- or unfurnish -- your upstairs rooms to save yourself housework during the hot weather. If so, you have probably been giving some thought to summer bedspreads and curtains, rugs and even slipcovers.

The textile people at the Bureau of Home Economics have also been giving thought to these articles -- in fact, they have been studying them for years. So they have many practical ideas to offer any housekeeper who is thinking about bedroom furnishings.

Take spreads, for example. You know what a bewildering array of bedspreads the stores are offering these days. So many colors and fabrics to choose from! So many different prices! And a lot of so-called "bargain" spreads that look so pretty and seem so cheap.

The textile people have found that appearance and price are not the only guides to a good spread. For example, they have found that size is an important consideration. If the spread is to look well, it must fit the bed. Some "bargain" spreads are short and skimpy. Then, if the spread is to wear and wash well, other practical points are cut and finish, fabric and color.

About size, the textile people have this to say: "See if the spread is of adequate size to cover the bed and pillows and still tuck in at the foot. Sizes for a double bed vary from 90 to 108 inches in length. The 90-inch length does not allow for covering the pillow. But the 102 or 108-inch length not only will cover the pillow but also will tuck in firmly at the foot. Width is important, too. A spread should at least conceal the mattress and other covers. A good rule is to buy your spread as wide as your widest sheet."

The practical bedspread for the average home is one that will stand a good deal of washing as well as long wear and still look well. The textile people find that cut is important for looks, wear and washing. When the ends of the spread are cut straight with the weave of the fabric, the spread keeps its good looks and does its job of covering the bed neatly. But sometimes you'll find a spread that is cut crooked, but appears straight when new. After washing, however, that crooked spread will take on its true shape.

Another practical point for wear, washing and looks is finish or workmanship. The way the spread is finished around the edge, the way its seams are made -- these may determine the service it will give. If scallops finish the edge, as they often do, then the stitching needs to be deep and close together to cover the raw edges and prevent the seams from pulling out and giving a shaggy appearance. If hems finish the edges, they need to be turned back far enough to hold well, and their stitching needs to be short and close to the edge. As for the seams, in general, the fewer the seams the better. But what seams there are must be deep enough and carefully stitched to hold.

As for fabric -- that's another practical consideration. For durability and washability, the smooth, even, firm weave is best. And for wear, washing and moderate price, cotton fabric is usually a good choice. Many bedspreads selling today have lumpy, uneven yarns woven into a loose, sleazy cloth. Many have striped and checked effects of large yarns combined with smaller ones. These may look attractive when new, but the textile people report that they never last as long as firm, even weaves. Breaks usually occur sooner or later along these heavy yarns before the rest of the spread begins to wear.

Bedspreads also need to endure a good deal of use without wrinkling or missing. And they are generally most practical if the fabric is heavy enough to conceal the bedding underneath.

See why the textile people emphasize cut, finish, and fabric as being as important as appearance and price in bedspreads?

Suppose I tell you what they report about special types of fabrics for summer spreads.

Seersucker spreads were old-time favorites and with good reason. Genuine seersucker, the kind in which the crepe stripes are woven in and so are permanent -- genuine seersucker is relatively inexpensive, gives long wear, washes easily, requires no ironing -- very important for saving labor in summer. Genuine seersucker does not wrinkle, and a good quality is heavy enough to conceal the bedding underneath. Seersucker comes in stripes of many summer colors. For a summer bedroom that is both smart and practical, you might have matching seersucker curtains and spreads.

Another kind of crepe spread on the market is plisse (plees-say). This is an attractive imitation of seersucker. It comes in delicate colors, is very lightweight, and is inexpensive. But it is not so durable as seersucker and its wrinkles are not permanent. Stretch the fabric between your hands. If the wrinkles disappear you are getting a plisse spread which, after a few washings, will be just a plain cloth.

Good quality cotton damask is another fabric that gives long satisfactory wear in bedspreads because it is firmly woven. Cotton damask spreads are reversible, come in 2-color combinations, and are suitable with any type of furniture except the heavy massive pieces. On the other hand, the cheap poor damask spreads on the market have many disadvantages. Their loose weave makes the yarns slip; the fabric will fray; the seams are likely to pull out; and they require dry-cleaning instead of washing.

Another durable kind of spread, and a labor saver into the bargain, is the candlewick tufted spread. These spreads are easy to wash, require no ironing, do not show wrinkles. The good grades give excellent service for their price. They are suitable with any kind of furniture.

Listeners, I could go on talking about bedspreads for another half-hour. And I also have plenty to say about summer curtains and rugs and so on. But we'll have to save that for another time. I'll just remind you that if you are in the home-furnishing mood these days, you are welcome to Department-of-Agriculture publications on curtains or on slip covers. Just write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

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